

NAPOLEON AT ST. HELENA.

BY R. H. TITHERINGTON.

THE LAST CHAPTER IN THE GREAT CONQUEROR'S CAREER, ITS PATHETIC INTEREST, AND THE CONTROVERSIES TO WHICH IT HAS GIVEN RISE.

THE figure of Napoleon is the only one that the modern world can set beside the great military adventurers of old—Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Jenghiz, and Timur; and it seems scarcely possible that there will ever be another career like that of the Corsican lawyer's son who conquered Europe. It is not strange that the Napoleonic literature should be tremendous in volume. Every phase of that marvelous man has been dealt with from almost every possible viewpoint. Even on the six last and, except those of his childhood, the least eventful years of his life, when he had ceased to be a power in the world, there is a considerable library of books.

Uneventful as was Napoleon's sojourn at St. Helena, it was an intensely interesting chapter of his life. There we see him bereft of the glamour of glory—"nakedly, as I am," he said himself—and with the sympathy that the pathos of his fallen estate compels. It is fortunate that, as Lord Rosebery points out in his clever monograph on the subject, nearly every one of the actors in this closing scene has recorded his part in it.

THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ OF ST. HELENA.

On Napoleon's staff in his island prison were three general officers who, after Waterloo, had clung to him to the last—Bertrand, his marshal of the palace, who was with him in Elba; Gourgaud, who had been aide to the Duc de Berri, but went back to the emperor during the Hundred Days; and Montholon. A fourth companion of his surrender was the Count de Las Cases, a former councillor of state. The count was an older man than any of the three soldiers, and stood nearest in intimacy

with Napoleon until he was removed from the island, in November, 1816, for attempting, in violation of the conditions on which he was permitted there, to send a secret communication to the emperor's brother Lucien.

Next in the household stood Barry O'Meara, whom Napoleon had met as surgeon of the *Bellerophon*. Taking a fancy to him, the emperor—Bathurst and Lowe are dead, and the title may be used without their permission—had asked to have O'Meara attached to his suite. The favor was granted, and the young Irish doctor served at St. Helena for nearly three years, Lowe finally dismissing him for another attempt at opening uncensored communication with Europe. He was succeeded by Francesco Antommarchi, a Corsican by birth, and a physician of reputation in Florence. Near the end, too, there were two Italian priests—Father Bonavita and the Abbé Vignale—who were sent out by the Pope at Napoleon's special request. The emperor had once professed Mohammedanism, had scoffed at religion—though he always believed in a Supreme Being—and had violated the sanctity of the head of the Catholic Church; but he died in the faith of his fathers.

Of all these, the priests wrote nothing, or at least nothing for the world. Bertrand used his pen, but only to set down, from Napoleon's dictation, notes on the campaigns of Egypt and Syria, which were published many years later. All the rest wrote more or less voluminously. The emperor encouraged them to do so, and told Gourgaud that he could earn from five hundred to a thousand dollars a day by recording the conversation at Longwood—a statement less absurd than it may sound,

for the world was eager for news, or even gossip, from the tiny island where its greatest spirit was immured. Las Cases made a fortune out of his "*Mémoires de Ste. Hélène*," and Warden's and O'Meara's books had a sale that was phenomenal for those days.

The emperor's jailers—it is the word he would have used, unless he could discover a still more unpleasant one—were equally prone to literature. Captain Maitland of the *Bellerophon*, who took Napoleon on board at Rochefort, began it; and, characteristically, he began it with a controversy with his prisoner, who accused the captain of bad faith as to the terms of the surrender. The record was taken up by Admiral Sir George Cockburn, whose flagship, the *Northumberland*, brought the emperor to St. Helena—the same Cockburn who figures in American history for the capture of Washington and the destruction of the Capitol. Dr. William Warden, the *Northumberland's* surgeon, who attended Napoleon during the voyage and on the island, on his return to England published a volume of letters narrating his conversations with the emperor. These were carried on with Las Cases as interpreter, for Dr. Warden spoke no French and Napoleon no English, and they were edited for publication by a "literary gentleman," so in their doubly or trebly diluted form they have small historical value.

Cockburn remained at St. Helena from the date of the *Northumberland's* arrival there (October 15, 1815) till the following summer, when he was succeeded in command of the naval station by Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm, and as governor of the island by the man whom the British government had selected for the hateful and thankless task of making Napoleon's prison tight enough to hold its dreaded captive beyond all possibility of escape. This was the celebrated Sir Hudson Lowe—a name immortalized by the execrations heaped upon it. During his five years at St. Helena, Lowe, of course, reported voluminously on matters great and small—chiefly the latter; and later, in the vain hope of stemming the torrent of vituperation that overwhelmed him,

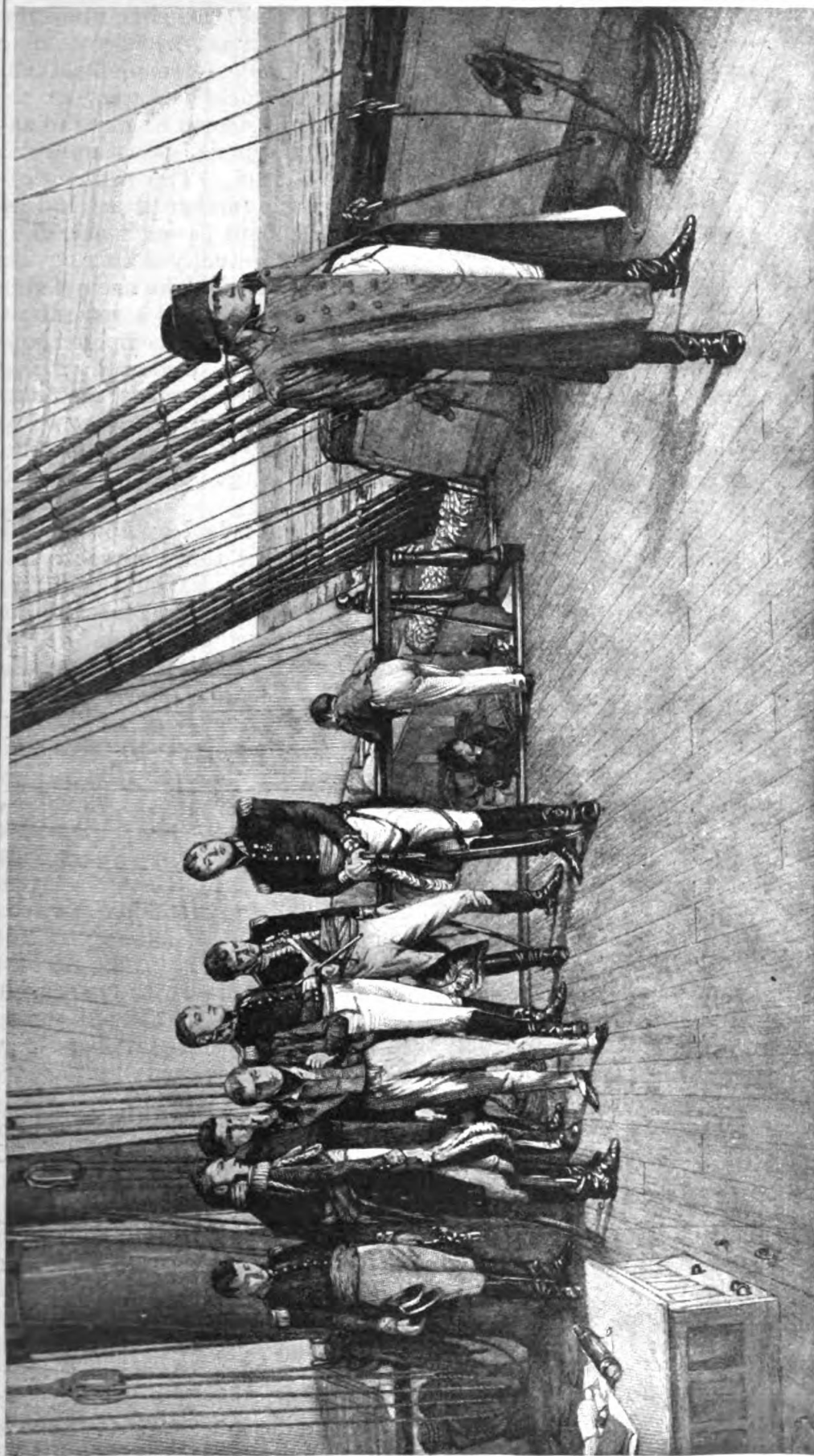
he furnished William Forsyth, a writer best known for his "*Life of Cicero*," with material for a tremendously lengthy vindication, which did not appear until after he had died, a broken and ruined man. Admiral Malcolm, apparently, did not record his experiences, but his wife, Lady Malcolm, kept a diary which has been published; and several other British officials or visitors wrote down the little they saw and heard.

Then there were the foreign commissioners at St. Helena, men selected, perhaps, for some such reason as that which sent *Rawdon Crawley* to Coventry Island; for it is hard to see what duty they performed or what purpose they served. But they lived there in such state as the lonely rock afforded—the Marquis de Montchenu, of France; Count Balmain, of Russia; and Baron Sturmer, of Austria; and, other amusements being scarce, they all turned to the compiling of memoirs. These might be expected to be impartial, but they are comparatively worthless, for the good reason that none of the commissioners ever met Napoleon.

Yet though we have an almost complete chain of first hand evidence upon the subject, the last phase of Napoleon's career is still an open subject for unlimited debate. The great question that underlies the endless discussion of St. Helena is this: was Napoleon ill treated there or not?

WAS NAPOLEON ILL TREATED?

That such a question should have aroused a bitter controversy which has continued for nearly a century, and is not wholly ended yet, shows the part that sentiment plays in history. During his active life, no man was ever more devotedly worshiped or more widely feared and hated than the self created Emperor of the French; but when destiny, so long his slave, turned upon him and hurled him from the mightiest of thrones to the loneliest of prisons, the pathos of his situation changed hatred to pity. The Parisian cartoonists, with characteristic indecency, amused their time serving constituency with caricatures of the exile of St. Helena, but elsewhere sympathy



"NAPOLEON ON THE BELLEROPHON"—W. Q. ORCHARDSON'S FAMOUS PAINTING, WHICH SHOWS THE DETHRONED EMPEROR WATCHING THE FRENCH COAST AS IT FADED OUT OF SIGHT FROM THE DECK OF THE BRITISH MAN OF WAR, TO WHOSE COMMANDER, CAPTAIN MAITLAND, HE HAD SURRENDERED.

was general. Even in England, the country that Napoleon called his "most constant foe," public feeling was sincerely stirred. It found utterance in speeches in Parliament criticising the government's policy—which, however, was successfully defended on the ground of political necessity. The books that presented the emperor's side of the case were eagerly read, while Lowe could get no hearing for a reply. Even Sir Walter Scott's defense of the luckless commander, which is fairly presented and in many respects convincing, made no impression, and Sir Hudson was ostracized, the government which he had served with unquestionable fidelity abandoning him to the popular outcry. A contemporary volume of memoirs* records that "he was so truly sent to Coventry that he once thanked Colonel Pennington in a coffee house for the common civility of handing him a newspaper, saying that any civility was now so new to him that he must be excused for gratefully acknowledging it."

That the controversy is not closed is shown by Lord Rosebery's recent volume on "Napoleon—The Last Phase." After reviewing some of the books that may be classified as coming from Longwood—those of Las Cases and of Antommarchi, and especially Gourgaud's private diary, published only three years ago—Lord Rosebery devotes much space to a severe condemnation of Lowe, while of Napoleon he writes with manifest sympathy.

The historian finds it difficult to treat properly the relations of Napoleon and Lowe. Here were two men on an island, who had a violent quarrel. One of the two was a very great man, perhaps the greatest man of all history; the other, in comparison, was an utter nonentity. Yet each is entitled to even justice at the hands of the chronicler; and, after all, the greatest human individual is small enough.

Lowe was a soldier. He was ordered to St. Helena with one great object in view—to hold fast the man who, confined in a gilded cage at Elba, had escaped and set Europe afire. This he did. It was not a difficult task, for

though there were continual rumors of projects for a rescue, none was ever attempted; and if any had been, the governor had ample force to frustrate it. Napoleon was held as a prisoner under a convention between England, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, drawn up at Paris in August, 1815. The manner of his treatment was further prescribed by an act of Parliament passed in April, 1816, "for more effectually detaining Napoleon Buonaparte." The name "Buonaparte," thus spelled, is a refusal to regard the prisoner as an emperor or even as a Frenchman. Under these instruments, and very explicit instructions from Lord Bathurst, secretary of state for the colonies, Lowe's attitude towards his charge was very precisely defined.

Great stress is laid by Lord Rosebery on the fact that the imperial title was rigidly denied to Napoleon. It would certainly be a matter for satisfaction if this harmless concession had been made; but it is useless to attack Lowe for carrying out his instructions. Nor is it easy to blame Lord Bathurst very severely for issuing those instructions. Great Britain, alone of all the powers of Europe, had never recognized Napoleon as emperor; for more than twenty years she had fought a life and death struggle against him; she had poured out blood like water, and had spent more than four billions of dollars in the conflict; and at last the man who had sworn to conquer and ruin her had surrendered to her arms. It would have been magnanimous to hail him, in his prison, as emperor; but it was only human to refuse to do so.

On the other hand, it is difficult to sympathize with Napoleon in the bitter fight he made, with such weapons as he could command, for the show of imperial honors. How much more kingly was the attitude of Charles V, who said, as he left his throne: "The name of Charles is enough for me, who henceforth am nothing." "In our position," Gourgaud wrote in his diary, "the best course is to accept the least;" but his master's philosophy did not rise so high. "Cockburn," says Lord Rosebery, "on shipboard resolutely inaugurated this solemn farce." Both Cockburn

* "Memoirs of a Highland Lady," by Mrs. Smith.

and Lowe acted on precise and definite orders from their official superiors; how could a soldier and a sailor have done otherwise? Their instructions to allow Napoleon no regal honors brought up many small questions for decision, and it is true that Lowe's action on some of these—for instance, his exclusion of a book inscribed "*Imperatori Napoleoni*," and of chess men marked with a crown—seem ridiculous to us; but the details of a question of etiquette are necessarily petty.

Lord Rosebery entirely veils the emperor's conduct towards his chief guardian. Napoleon could be as contemptibly small as he could be colossally great; and to Lowe he showed himself almost at his worst. His language was that of a street Arab to the policeman who arrests him, rather than that of a French emperor to a British lieutenant general.

THE PERSONALITY OF SIR HUDSON LOWE.

If Lowe had not been governor of St. Helena during Napoleon's captivity, he might be remembered as a soldier whose share in the great wars of his day was an interesting, though scarcely an important one. He was born in Galway in 1769—the year of Napoleon's birth, unless it be true that he



"NAPOLEON IN HIS LAST DAYS"—A STATUE MODELED BY VINCENZO VELA, IN THE MUSEUM AT VERSAILLES.

exchanged dates with his brother Joseph—the son of an English army surgeon who had married an Irish lady. As a young officer in the Fiftieth Foot, Lowe served in Corsica, at Toulon, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. In 1799 he was appointed to command a body of two hundred Corsicans under British pay; and he and his men fought in Egypt and in Spain under Sir John Moore. In 1805 he organized and commanded a larger foreign corps in Italy.

where he defended Capri, but had to surrender the place to a French force under Lamarque. He was not held blameworthy for the disaster, and was appointed governor of part of the Ionian Islands. He states—and with all the hard things that have been said of him he has not been convicted of un-
 veracity—that for twenty years, from 1793 to 1812, he never missed a single day's duty, and spent only six months in England, during the temporary peace in 1802. In 1813 he was ordered to the scene of Napoleon's last struggle in Germany, as inspector of the twenty thousand German troops who were drawing their pay from the British treasury. He was with Blücher during much of the campaign, and remained with him in the following year, when the allies invaded France. His services seem to have been considered valuable, for he was knighted and made a major general, besides receiving Russian and Prussian decorations.

In the campaign of 1815, Lowe was for a few weeks Wellington's quartermaster general; but before Waterloo he was ordered to Genoa, to take command of troops raised there. Entering France, he occupied Marseilles; and when he left, on the restoration of the Bourbon government, the citizens presented him with a testimonial for "saving them from pillage." His post at St. Helena was regarded as a very important one; its salary was sixty thousand dollars a year. He was selected for it as an officer who was proficient in French and Italian, and who had had a wide and varied experience, having associated with many of the great men of the day.

NAPOLÉON'S BATTLE WITH LOWE.

Such was the man who, on presenting himself to Napoleon, met with the extraordinary reception described by O'Meara and by Lowe himself. The emperor would not listen to him, but poured out wild rodomontades about liberty or death, and torrents of personal abuse. He tells the governor that his reports on the campaign of 1814 were "full of folly and falsehood"; to which Lowe replies: "I believe I saw what I have stated."

When Lowe asks Napoleon to signify his wishes about the building of the house for which material has been brought from England, the emperor bursts out with: "I believe that you have received orders to kill me—yes, to kill me—yes, sir, I believe that you have received orders to stick at nothing—nothing!" And finally Lowe has to leave without any answer.

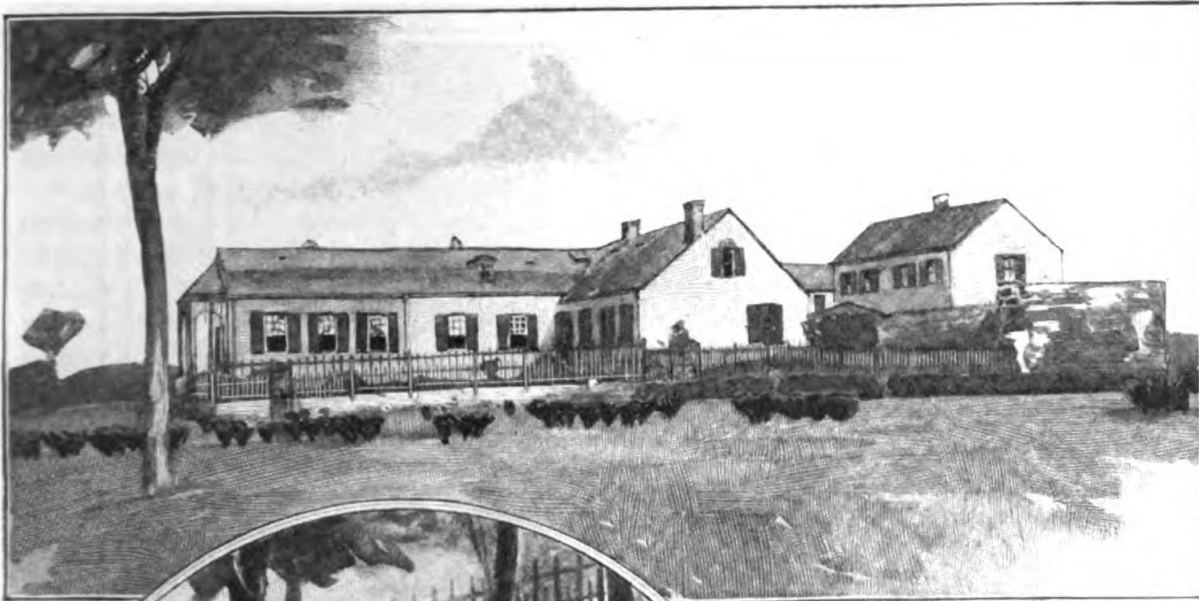
At their fifth interview, Napoleon—dropping into his native Italian, as he so often did—tells Lowe that he is no soldier, but only a *scrivano* (clerk); a *sbirro Siciliano* (Sicilian thief catcher), not an Englishman; a commandant of brigands. Lowe answers that he only did his duty and acted according to orders.

"So does the hangman," retorts the emperor.

Finally Lowe says that Napoleon's language is uncivil and ungentlemanlike, and that he will not listen to it; and from that day he makes no further attempt at personal intercourse with his prisoner.

Lowe may have been lacking in tact—in fact, he must have been, for scarcely any one at St. Helena had a good word for him; but the provocation to the soldier's self respect was extreme. And had he possessed the tact of a Machiavelli, combined with the patience of a Job, he would have failed to conciliate Napoleon. It was the exiled emperor's set purpose, which stands out consistently in all his dealings with his guardians, to set himself before the eyes of the world as a martyr. That was the keynote of all the squabbles about money, about food, about restrictions of liberty, which make such sorry reading in the annals of St. Helena. That was why Napoleon sold his plate to supply his table, and broke up his bed for fire wood—a parade of poverty that was theatrical to the verge of childishness, when he had millions at his disposal.

Montholon practically admitted as much, years later, to Basil Jackson, a British officer who had served on the island. "*C'était notre politique*," he said, "*et que voulez vous?*" It was Napoleon's game—a small game, perhaps, but he was a man to play small games



LONGWOOD, NAPOLEON'S RESIDENCE
DURING HIS CAPTIVITY AT
ST. HELENA.



THE GRAVE IN WHICH NAPOLEON WAS
BURIED IN MAY, 1821—HIS BODY
WAS REMOVED TO PARIS IN 1840.

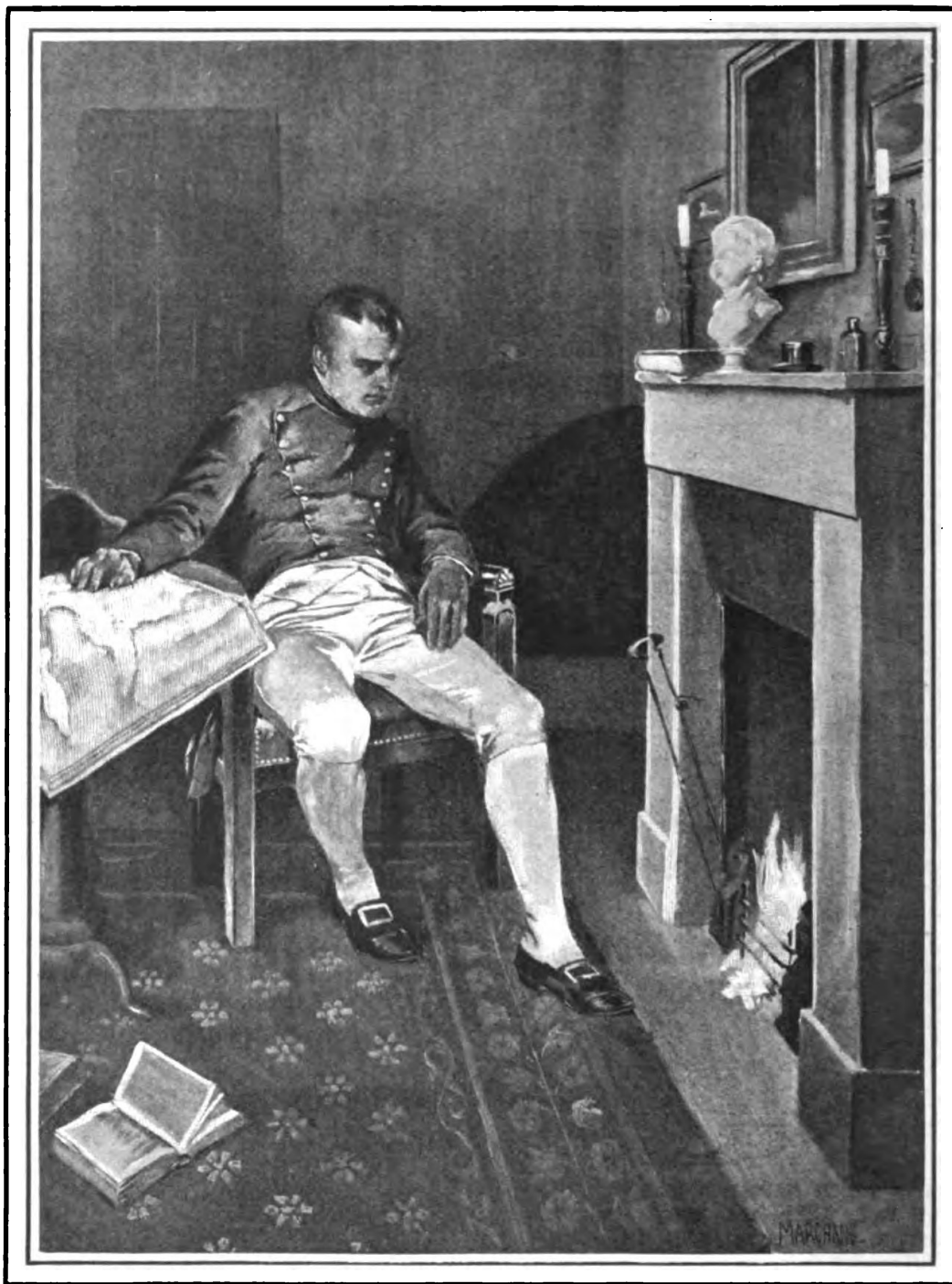
when he could not play large ones; and it was not by any means an objectless game, for the emperor undoubtedly believed that there was at least a chance of English sympathy intervening in his favor. He said—according to Gourgaud—that a change of government in London might liberate him. Both the optimism and the misjudgment of the British temper were characteristic. So he played his game to the last, and though it did

nothing for him, it irretrievably blackened Lowe.

Much has been said of the indignity put upon Napoleon by the requirement that he should be seen daily by a British officer, to make sure that he had not slipped away. It is true that Lowe issued such an order, but he did not enforce it, though of



JAMESTOWN, THE ONLY VILLAGE ON THE ISLAND OF ST. HELENA
—A BIRD'S EYE VIEW FROM THE STEEP HILL ABOVE THE TOWN.



NAPOLEON IN THE LITTLE ROOM THAT SERVED AS HIS STUDY AND SLEEPING CHAMBER AT LONGWOOD—THE BUST OF HIS SON, THE KING OF ROME, WAS ONE OF THE FEW ORNAMENTS IN THE APARTMENT.

course he had the power to do so. An officer was detailed to get a daily glimpse of the prisoner as he might show himself about the grounds of Longwood, but Napoleon frequently kept his room, and a week or more would pass without a sight of him. It must be remembered that the British government had been severely criticised, in Parliament, for the lack of effective precautions against his escape from Elba. That hugely expensive adventure was rendered pos-

sible, or at least greatly facilitated, by the fact that the British commissioner, Sir Niel Campbell, was unable to watch the emperor's movements because "his majesty" habitually refused to see him—a fact which may have had its influence upon the question of allowing imperial honors to Napoleon in his second exile. In a memorial which the Russian government presented to the other powers, urging that his custody at St. Helena should be made stricter, great

stress was laid upon the point of personal surveillance, and it was suggested that he should be compelled, by force if necessary, to show himself twice a day to the governor and to the commissioners.

"Nothing can be more absurd, more impolitic, less generous, and less delicate than the conduct of the English to Napoleon," said Balmain, the Russian representative on the island. The criticism reads rather curiously in the light of his own government's demand for increased rigor in the treatment of the prisoner. The captive emperor did not receive the courtesy that we who are free from the rancors of that day would fain have had accorded him, but it can scarcely be doubted that if he had been in the hands of any of the continental powers he would have fared worse. If, as for a time seemed possible, he had been turned over to the tender mercies of Louis XVIII, as a rebellious French subject, he would probably have been shot, as Marshal Ney was.

THE UNHAPPY HOUSEHOLD OF LONGWOOD.

The whole St. Helena colony, prisoners and jailers, lived in an extraordinary atmosphere of mutual hostility, suspicion, deception, and treachery. Almost every one of the pretended histories that came from the island is tainted with falsehood. O'Meara's "Voice from St. Helena" was inspired by the Irish doctor's bitter hatred of Lowe, who had him dismissed from the navy; and Forsyth's "Captivity of Napoleon" proves it to be full of misrepresentations. Las Cases' book is shown by Lord Rosebery to be "an arsenal of spurious documents," containing the most daring and most dangerous forgeries. Gourgaud says that the count kept a *journal faux*; what purpose this spurious diary served is not clear, but it does not increase our confidence in its author. O'Meara declares that Montholon was untruthful. Antommarchi was undoubtedly so. His

treatment of the malady that finally killed Napoleon was so unsatisfactory that the emperor took a violent dislike to him, refused to see him, and dismissed him with a scathing letter. Of all this, in his book on "Les Derniers Moments de Napoleon," the Florentine doctor says not a word; on the contrary, he represents himself and his patient as conversing together on terms of intimacy to the last.

The men of Napoleon's petty court were bitterly jealous of one another. "Longwood," said Bertrand, "is made detestable by their disputes." Gourgaud challenged Montholon to a duel, and broke into vehement protests when the emperor wrote a too friendly note to Las Cases. The exiled Frenchmen were beset by deadly weariness. "*Ennui*," "*Je pleure*," are typical entries in Gourgaud's diary.

Napoleon himself, inconsistent as ever, sometimes endured his fate with philosophic fortitude, and sometimes boiled with futile rage. He had very little intercourse with any but the members of his household. He never left the neighborhood of Longwood, because he would not submit to Lowe's regulation that a British officer must accompany him on any more distant excursion. The foreign commissioners were debarred from the house, because he declined to receive them in an official capacity, and they refused to come in any other. With the British naval and military officers he held practically no intercourse; Admiral Malcolm he could tolerate, though he called him a "*sot*"; to Lowe he never spoke after the first three months, and written communication was cut off by the fact that the governor would not allow the use of the imperial title, while Napoleon would look at no paper without it.

The story of the dethroned emperor's six years of imprisonment at St. Helena would be positively comical if it were not so pathetic.

QUATRAIN.

Who hath no need of pain
To chasten and control,
God pity him, for he must be
Dwarfed and infirm of soul.